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ABSTRACT

A 3-day conference conducted by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research with the support of the Ford Foundation explored a range of problems that blue collar workers have with their jobs and discussed new directions for industrial work which would decrease worker alienation and "humanize" the quality of work. The 42 conference participants represented management, unions, the Federal Government, universities, magazines, and the Ford Foundation. Some suggested approaches for alleviating job discontent and improving worker attitudes included job enrichment and redesign programs, organizational restructuring, and increasing opportunities for individual development to maximize productivity. Diverse viewpoints and interests are illustrated with quotations from conference discussions. (AG)

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New Directions in the World of Work

A Conference Report

Charlton R. Price

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New Directions in the World of Work

A Conference Report

By
CHARLTON R. PRICE

March 1972

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Foreword

This publication is a report of a three-day conference conducted by the W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research with the support of The Ford Foundation. The conference was addressed to a range of problems workers are finding with their jobs and what new directions might be sought to deal with these problems. The 42 participants in the conference represented management, unions, the federal government, universities, magazines such as *Fortune,* and The Ford Foundation.

The tenor of the conference was set in the reading of a recent statement that had been delivered to a meeting of General Electric Corporation stockholders by one of the corporation's senior vice presidents:

> We see a potential problem of vast significance to all industrial companies. . . .
>
> This involves the slowly rising feeling of frustration, irritation and alienation of the blue collar worker, the "hard hats" if you will, but not just the activists in big cities. It involves a gut feeling on their part that industrial society has left them with the dull, hard, dirty jobs — and doesn't care.

The conference explored causes and consequences of the workers' "gut feeling"; it also explored new directions already being taken and others that could be taken to "humanize" the quality of work in the American workplace.

This report is one of three Institute publications that will appear this year, dealing with the revolutionary changes that are overtaking the world of work in America. This summer The Free Press will publish the book *Where Have All the Robots Gone?* edited by Dr. Harold L. Sheppard, a senior staff member of the Institute, and Neal Q. Herrick, Deputy Administrator for Program Development, Employee Standards Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, who served on the Institute's Washington office research staff during 1971 as a Federal Executive Fellow. In the fall of this year a report to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare on *Work in America* will be published; it is being prepared by a working group under the direction of the Institute. These three publications are products of the Institute's ongoing research interest in the quality of the nation's worklife, and in the accumulative evidence that more attention needs to be given by management, labor unions, government, and social science researchers to the potentially disruptive effects on the nation's labor force caused by what has come to be identified variously as "blue-collar blues," "job discontent," or "job dissatisfaction."

Until quite recently, the "tough-minded" men of business and labor in the United States tended to minimize any concern over "what was on the workers' minds" beyond the traditional concerns pertaining to wages, job security, and the physical conditions of work. The evidence is mounting, however, that "something has gone wrong" in the American workplace, manifested in such alienated behavior as high turnover rates despite rising wage levels, absenteeism (which has increased as much as 100 percent in the automobile industry in the past 10 years), sabotage, and the use of drugs. There has also emerged the phenomenon of increasingly articulate demands for relief from monotonous and unfulfilling jobs — jobs that have reduced the workers' autonomy and judgment to the level of near worthlessness. These demands can no longer be evaded.

This conference report deals constructively and creatively with the contemporary "workplace revolution." The verbatim transcripts of the conference, the tapes of smaller discussion groups that formed outside of the plenary sessions, and the papers that were delivered at the conference sessions are all summarized with consummate skill in this report, prepared by the experienced conference rapporteur, Mr. Charlton R. Price.

The Institute expresses its gratitude to the participants in the conference, listed in the Appendix, and to The Ford Foundation, which supported both the conference and some of the basic on-the-job research conducted by the Institute prior to the conference.

Ben S. Stephansky
Associate Director

Washington, D.C.
March 1972

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New Directions in the World of Work

A Conference Report

Rapid and complex social change seems to be the only certainty for the rest of this century, and probably beyond. This turbulence is affecting all parts of the industrialized world. While attention has been focused on upheavals in education, in religious institutions, in the relations between racial groups, and in other aspects of community life, less heed has been paid to what has been happening *on the job*. Work itself has not been defined as a social problem since the days of sweatshops and skullcracking. But a lot of evidence has been accumulating to force awareness that the changes going on in the world of work are as profound and as potentially disruptive as in any other part of modern society. This turbulence is centered in, but by no means limited to, the heart of modern industry: big organizations in basic types of production such as steel, autos, and materials processing; and large business organizations in which advanced technology is making increasing inroads on traditionally white-collar work such as insurance, banking, and other so-called service industries.

The millions of people who clock in each day at these thousands of workplaces are entering what some have called the postindustrial era. They face new types of technology that force new definitions of work and affect the very shape of the organization as formerly useful skills become irrelevant and new ways have to be found to make the cost/benefit ratios come out favorably. But frequently the experience has been that the organization and the work roles within it have not kept pace with the new market conditions, new technology, and new types of workers that demand a different organizational response. Instead, management, job organization, and work methods developed in the assembly-line heyday of earlier industrialism have persisted. Many kinds of work have therefore remained monotonous and unfulfilling, or have become more so — given the changed nature of the contemporary work force.

Workers caught in this crunch are reacting in various ways which point to worklife as a rapidly emerging social problem, and which indicate that problems at work have effects far beyond the workplace itself. We can no longer console ourselves with the old bromide that "leisure" activities can serve as antidotes to the negative components of work roles.

It is becoming clear that problems in life on the job today are both symptoms and causes of the turmoil throughout the society. At the very least, it has become evident that more attention needs to be paid by management, unions, government, industrial researchers — and indeed everyone with a stake in the future of the society — to what is happening in the

world of work and what new directions might be taken to deal with rapidly burgeoning problems that seem to be anchored in current work experience.

That was the purpose of a conference convened in Williamsburg, Virginia, by the W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research in late March 1971. To it came more than 40 invited participants from management, unions, the federal government, universities, and the press. The purposes of the three-day meeting were to:

— Get as clear and comprehensive a view as possible of current problems in the world of work that have come to the attention of all of the groups represented by the participants.

— Consider how such problems affect all participants as individuals and as organizational representatives.

— Study and evaluate a variety of new approaches that are being tried by industry, unions, government, and others to deal with work-centered problems.

— Identify and recommend how these approaches or others might be improved or more widely used — and by whom.

As the account of the conference that follows makes clear, the Williamsburg meeting was only partially successful in achieving these ambitious objectives. The sessions did bring to light many problems in current work experience, and a beginning was made in identifying the reasons for them. After much exposition of various ways that are being tried to deal with these problems, there was some discussion. And a variety of further policy and action steps in both the public and the private sectors was proposed and commented upon.

But no consensus was reached on any one of the conference themes. There seemed to be two main reasons for this (apart from the difficulty of coming to agreement about anything in only three days with such a varied group and on such a complex subject). The first was that the kinds of work problems emerging today seem to challenge fundamental management and union practices, as well as government policies — policies that were developed in an earlier era to meet a different set of conditions than now obtains. (This is an example of the "lag" phenomenon mentioned earlier.) A second reason, never clearly stated at the conference and therefore more difficult to deal with, was the fact that problems in worklife look very different when seen from the perspective of each of the various interests represented at the conference table. Little wonder, then, that no clear agreement emerged on what next steps need to be taken, or by whom. But it seemed evident that improving the quality of life at work is long overdue as an area requiring attention and action.

These were some of the themes that highlighted the conference: work-life problems and their interrelations, experience to date with new solutions, and recommendations for further action. At many points in this report attention is drawn to issues that remained largely below the surface in the Williamsburg meeting but that cannot be avoided as the search for new directions in the world of work continues.

Background for Williamsburg

Harold L. Sheppard of the Upjohn Institute, who organized and chaired the Williamsburg meeting, pointed out that a number of reasons combined to make such a gathering seem practical and urgent.

— Recent research by himself and others has shown that the workers holding jobs that they themselves regard as most monotonous and least fulfilling are also the workers who are most alienated from both the company *and* the union, and most likely to seek extreme political solutions as voters and citizens (or to "cop out" entirely from the political process — a dangerous trend for a representative democracy).

— Management and union experience in many plants tends to support this conclusion, but in different ways. Despite high unemployment and a tightened job market, many companies are still experiencing high rates of turnover, lowered productivity, increases in work disputes and grievances, and here and there even sabotage of property or products. Meanwhile, leaders in many unions have found that they are out of touch with much of their membership; the credibility and confidence gap sometimes shows up dramatically in union election battles, nonratification of contracts, but more often in apathy towards and lack of participation in union affairs.

— Manpower development and training policies in government to a limited extent have begun to be related more closely to some of these new conditions. But some of the newest thinking has not yet been widely reported or is "between the lines" in pending legislation. Meanwhile, new major problems, such as the absorption of three million school graduates each year in a period of high unemployment and the retraining of the often highly skilled workers displaced by aerospace and defense cutbacks, are naturally drawing attention from on-the-job problems. But the conference might indicate how government policies and programs could be more responsive to emerging work problems highlighted in the research and in recent management and union experience.

— Finally, in a number of places and with a variety of approaches, various efforts — so far incompletely documented — are beginning

to be made to cope with the consequences of an industrial system in which management and organization principles geared to efficiency through work simplification (task fragmentation) and highly routinized production systems seem to be less and less effective.

— Some of these new initiatives have been taken by unions. (The general impression conveyed by the conference was that more have come from the management side.) Certain employers focus upon the enrichment, enlargement, and redesign of individual jobs. In other instances, emphasis is upon *groups* of jobs, even the design or redesign of whole department or plant work systems in ways intended to make work effort more productive by making it more meaningful and satisfying. Still other approaches bridge from the organization to the community, such as the hiring and training of many persons previously considered unemployable, or programs of training and counseling leading to new careers.

Basil Whiting from The Ford Foundation, which underwrote much of the Upjohn Institute conference, gave additional reasons for paying more attention than heretofore to the "Suddenly Remembered American," or the "mainstream worker" and his problem.[1]

One reason is the *quality-of-life* issue: "People ought to have a satisfying life, and the job is a big part of that life."

There is an obvious *economic* argument: Industry faces cost, profit, and product-quality problems stemming from increasing absenteeism and work disruptions, not infrequent sabotage, and lower motivation and productivity; some of these problems might be addressed in part by making work experience more satisfying through job enrichment or other methods.

There is also a *social policy* reason: It is a good thing for a society to make the most flexible and productive use of its human resources.

There is the *political* aspect: When significant proportions of mainstream people began to put on "hardhats" and/or support George Wallace and others advocating extreme and possibly repressive solutions to the nation's problems, the specter of extreme alienation and threats to the democratic process was raised.

Signs of Cultural Shift

Michael Maccoby, of Harvard University, who has been studying relationships between technology and social character (the basic personality

[1]The Williamsburg Conference, however, took up in some detail the work problems of people outside the "mainstream," as presented in this paper.

types most common to a culture) led off the meeting by describing what he has seen of the changing meanings of work and work problems under the current conditions of fast culture change. He commented first on the term "alienation," pointing out that it has (at least) two meanings and that both need to be considered in understanding what is now going on.

First, alienation may describe the distance between a person and his society. About 10 years ago, when much social commentary had to do with the problem of conformity, it could be said that some alienation in this sense would be a good thing since those with an independent view would be the hope for progress and constructive change. Another meaning of alienation concerns the relationship of the individual to himself. A person is alienated from himself when there is a split between his thoughts and his feelings. The converse would be a self-directed, self-aware person who can fully mature and fully develop his potential. If this distinction can be maintained, it becomes easier to see a variety of forces at work in society today that are leading to more autonomy and individualism but also threatening the individual's concept of his own worth and his life prospects.

We are going through some profound cultural changes, Mr. Maccoby maintained, and it is not surprising that evidence of this should show up in the world of work as elsewhere.

Younger people, in particular, are much less willing to accept authoritarian influences at work or in the community. The demand to participate in events and to have a say in what happens is very widespread, not just shown by the demonstrations that grab the headlines but in attitudes and behavior at work and in the family. In some ways this may look like a return to an earlier, more participative America with face-to-face relationships and town meetings. In the period between, when there were waves of migration from European cultures which stressed strong control in the family, the same kind of paternal direction could be accepted in the workplace. The children and more especially the grandchildren of these immigrants have few ties with this *paterfamilias* type of upbringing and its associated values. But even in Europe the script, the plot, and the actors are changing today.

Another important change has been in the much wider spread of educational opportunity, according to Mr. Maccoby. With some form of publicly supported higher education at bearable cost increasingly available to almost everyone, "there may be less opportunity to be a J. P. Morgan, but for the average middle-class person the opportunity to do rather well is increased." However, Mr. Maccoby pointed out that this is not an unmixed blessing:

With the greater availability of opportunity, there is no longer the

> excuse of having "a certain station in life" to excuse failure. If everyone can make the team, when you don't make it, whose fault is it? You can either feel it's your fault, which is very hard for most of us to do; or you have to say there's something wrong with the guys who are running it; or those pointy-headed intellectuals are the ones who are at fault; or there's something funny going on there in Washington. These are the feelings of deep resentment — of being a loser in a society in which only the winners are appreciated. And to be a loser is to be nobody.

This, Mr. Maccoby contended, is a definite change in American society, and one that has made many people angry and increasingly alienated in the first definition of the term. This is shown in the research by Mr. Sheppard and others.[2] Those workers who see the greatest gap between their life situation and their original hopes are the most alienated (in the sense defined by Mr. Sheppard), and apparently the most willing to seek extreme and repressive political "solutions" for what they perceive as what's wrong with the country and their lives.

And, Mr. Maccoby maintained, such feelings are not confined to "hardhats" or the blue-collar world in general; his recent studies in high-technology industry and companies developing large systems indicate that dissatisfaction with lack of fulfillment on the job (and what that implies about achievement of life hopes) may be as high as 80 percent among managerial and technical people. The critical point is that such feelings are part of a new ethos, and *not* of the life style of one particular class (or race).

Study of work in terms of its relationship to social character shows that some kinds of work can lead to great satisfaction for a particular personality or character type but not for others. (There are some signs of this in the Sheppard study.) Therefore, said Mr. Maccoby, one measure of the depth of a culture is how much it allows people with different character types to develop themselves. The question for the future, he added, will be: Will the *worklife* experiences available be on the side of creating *more* alienation or on the side of allowing the possibility of individuals to develop themselves to the fullest?

Worker Attitudes: How Much Has Changed?

Mr. Maccoby was talking in general terms, basing his claim about basic shifts occurring in the culture partly on the Upjohn Institute studies by Mr. Sheppard but also on data from his own research, from Neal Her-

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[2]Harold L. Sheppard and Neal Q. Herrick, *Where Have All the Robots Gone?* to be published by The Free Press in 1972.

rick's analysis of a national sample of workers,[3] and from Mr. Herrick's separate study of union representatives, managers, and workers. Findings from Mr. Herrick's studies had been distributed to the conference participants in advance, but unfortunately were not discussed in any detail at Williamsburg.

But these data and those from Mr. Sheppard's research showed far more dissatisfaction among younger and better educated workers, but the data could not answer definitively the question of whether young people today are more alienated from work than young people in the past. Mr. Herrick's study showed that three times more respondents under age 30 expressed dissatisfaction with work than did those over age 44. This finding does suggest some basic change, and the notion of cultural change is further supported by the fact that blacks under age 30 were by far the most *dis*satisfied subgroup while blacks over age 44 were among the most satisfied.[4]

In general, conference participants tended to be unimpressed with survey findings; they preferred to rely more on their selective personal experiences and deep-rooted convictions based on their conflicting "wills to believe." This seemed to stem less from a refusal to face the facts than from any difficulty in making inference from survey data. To know whether real change has been taking place or whether the kinds of differences reported are new versions of long-established patterns (e.g., the old versus the young), one would need longitudinal studies rather than "snapshot" surveys at a particular point in time. For example, does the seemingly lower dissatisfaction of older workers mean a real sense of being better off, or as Jerome Rosow (Assistant Secretary of Labor, now of Standard Oil of New Jersey) suggested, does it mean resigning one's self to one's lot in life as one grows older? And if the latter, what is the total social cost of such resignation?

> Mr. Rosow: I wouldn't say the workers get more satisfied with age — I'd say they get less dissatisfied. That's a rather important distinction. People are adaptable to life circumstances.

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[3]*Ibid.*
This book contains the highlights of the survey conducted for the U.S. Department of Labor by the Survey Research Center of The University of Michigan. See *Survey of Working Conditions*, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Standards Administration, August 1971.

[4]These are from The University of Michigan nationwide sample, consisting of a mix of occupations, sex, race, and region. In the Sheppard study, consisting *exclusively* of white male union members (nearly all blue-collar), only 34 percent of workers under 30 were satisfied most of the time with their jobs in contrast to 48 percent of those 30-54, and 64 percent of those 55 and older.

The Upjohn Institute studies had included analysis of the types of jobs held by respondents as well as their age, seniority, income, union activity, and other characteristics. Mr. Sheppard found that the older workers in dull, unchallenging jobs were the most likely to say that if they had the chance they would retire immediately, or leave and go to a *better* job. And Mr. Herrick's studies show that workers themselves tend to say that their work fulfillment needs improvement more than their pay, while union leaders have the opposite opinion.[5]

So at least three questions were raised by the survey findings but could not be answered by them:

1. *Who* is dissatisfied?
2. *What* are they dissatisfied about?
3. Are these dissatisfactions new and pressing, or merely different versions of long-standing issues on the industrial scene?

Mr. Maccoby said that, though he himself believes a cultural shift is taking place "because even when income is at stake, people demand more now," it is difficult to tell what is going on from the survey findings alone.

> Any survey data such as these at a time of rapid historical change have to be looked at carefully. It's hard to tell if we're seeing a difference at different points in the life cycle, or an historical change.

The Effects of Occupational Change

Robert Schrank of The Ford Foundation (a former blue-collar worker) listed a number of ways in which, as he sees it, worker attitudes today reflect a deep cultural change rather than a less fundamental shift. There has been, for one thing, a trend away from craft and industrial occupations toward service jobs. There is a rising level of expectations: In the 1930's, one might have felt lucky just to have a job since others were waiting at the plant gates to take one's place; now people demand more. The civil rights revolution has perhaps led to a feeling that all minorities should get special consideration, and everyone is a member of some minority group. As a result, many younger workers, instead of staying on the job and fighting management, may elect to stay away (play hooky) or quit if they find job conditions unacceptable.

Acceptance of welfare is now a real though unattractive alternative to work. Furthermore, it is getting harder in many instances to know what work is and what the job consists of. Many workers carry over thoughtways derived from the assembly-line era, but in highly automated plants

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[5]Sheppard and Herrick, *op. cit.*, Chapter 12.

they are *tending* machines rather than *operating* them. Automation, from the point of view of management, has also been seen as one way of dealing with worker dissatisfaction and resulting productivity problems. Some managers, commented Judson Gooding of *Fortune,* feel that what the country needs to "solve" this problem is a good dose of unemployment to reduce workplace disruptions because "the new generation has had it too good." Yet recently at one major auto company, 4,000 new hires in a year's time never even stayed through the first day on the job, and this at a time when local unemployment rates were between 8 and 9 percent. Mr. Sheppard's view was that "this wouldn't have happened in the thirties — these 4,000 left because of the nature of the job. I don't want to downplay the issue of unemployment, but something else is going on."

That "something else," Mr. Gooding remarked later, is a movement for self-determination:

> This is the movement of the decade. Students, priests, diplomats, and soldiers have pushed for it, and workers want it now.

But that this is "something new" was sharply challenged by other participants:

> Mr. Fishman: There's the implication here that the older workers were a bunch of docile dolts. Who do you think organized the unions in the thirties? It was the guys who were then young. The revolt then took the form of organizing the union. In the auto unions, at least, the whole struggle begun then continues today. It's a desire on the part of the worker to democratize the workplace. He wants to have more of a say over the conditions that exist.

But from the point of view of the young, yesterday's militants may look like part of today's Establishment.

> Mr. Gooding: The current UAW members, many from different parts of the country and from different races, don't dig the leadership that came in in the heroic times.

Mr. Sheppard felt that the discussions had helped to confirm what earlier research by himself and others had shown.

> The kind of job a guy has makes a difference. *Within* each wage level, jobs that offer less autonomy and less challenge have negative consequences for the worker and for society. High wages *alone* won't solve this problem.

Therefore, Mr. Sheppard continued, what is happening in the world of work should be of concern not only to management and union leadership but to people in their roles as citizens. *Management* should be concerned because those in noninvolving jobs tend to have lower productivity, leave

the job more readily, and perhaps have a greater tendency to file grievances if they don't leave their jobs. *Unions* need to pay attention to the problem created by the long history of work simplification (and/or Taylorism) because the people in the most dead-end, least fulfilling jobs are also those least favorably inclined toward their union leadership. And *citizens* need to be concerned because it is these same workers who are "less trusting in the social order and less confident about their own impact on government decisionmaking." Mr. Sheppard then stated the case even more strongly:

> Responsible men and women, apart from their roles as employers or union leaders, should be concerned about the role of work experience in the development or reinforcement of such beliefs [about what is wrong with the society and what ought to be done about it], *even if* job traits do *not* appear to affect productivity or union attachments.

The Work Itself: Focus on Individual Jobs

The work systems of mass production industry and large-scale clerical operations have in the main been designed to maximize productivity and quality at minimal cost by tediously detailed design of the workflow and the greatest possible fragmentation of individual jobs at each stage. Thus larger numbers of boring, dead-end jobs were created with little opportunity for growth or learning. The system worked as long as people could be found to perform such jobs, but now this is becoming more difficult.

> Mr. Sheppard: The educational level has been going up, and meanwhile jobs either have not been enriched to keep pace or have been even further simplified. Therefore we're imposing more meaningless jobs on people less willing to stand for this.

Or, as Robert Ford of AT&T said more pointedly:

> We have run out of dumb people to handle those dumb jobs. So we have to rethink what we're doing.

Some efforts have been made in recent years to reverse this trend toward fragmentation of tasks in the hope that higher motivation, and hence lower costs and higher work quality and productivity, can be obtained by making the work itself more responsible and more varied, with more opportunities for growth and learning. These initiatives (they can hardly yet be called a trend or a movement) are often described as job enrichment or job enlargement. At Williamsburg several such programs were described and to some extent discussed. The most time was devoted to activities in the telephone companies.

Work Itself Program in the Bell System

The job redesign activities to promote "motivation through the work itself," initiated by AT&T, have the longest history of any program of this type — more than a decade — and have probably affected the jobs of more than 10,000 workers in a score of operating companies. Robert Ford reported some highlights from the 20 separate efforts that have been undertaken and some principles of job enrichment through collaborative redesign that these experiences have tested and confirmed. His book, *Motivation Through the Work Itself,* is now the source for many new ideas.[6]

Efforts were directed to a variety of technical customer service and lower level management operations in which there were significant investments (in terms of numbers of people employed) and to work problems such as erratic productivity, high turnover, and high rates of error. The making of telephone directories was used as an illustration. Where a number of small books had to be produced for individual towns in one company's service area, the women doing the work had never had responsibility for a total book. The jobs were redesigned so that one worker had complete responsibility for compiling the listings, making changes, and checking for errors. There had been 3.97 errors per hundred listings under the old method; with the job redesigned to increase the scope of the work and its responsibility, no errors were found after 30 days.

In another situation, payroll accounting and keypunching, similar dramatic results were obtained. The key feature in deciding upon and implementing changes was to involve the workers themselves and their supervisors in the redesign process, through what came to be called "green light sessions." Diagnosis and consultative help of a detailed and skillful type is needed, but the consultant cannot institute change from the top down if he expects it to "take," Mr. Ford said.

The same principles were followed in work with equipment installers, customer service representatives, engineering designers, and, most recently, telephone equipment makers at Western Electric: redesign of the workflow and the content of individual jobs to give more variety, more control over the product, and more responsibility; a collaborative approach in determining the details of redesign; and emphasis on improving the content and arrangement of the work itself, rather than on human relations training or counseling.

In touching on these examples, Mr. Ford emphasized the principles of job enrichment technique that have evolved as a result of the telephone company experience. Among these principles are:

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[6]New York: American Management Association, 1969.

— People should be able to check their own work and correct errors on their own. "If you want to be sure the catcher misses baseballs, tell him there's someone behind him and not to worry."

— Work itself can be a motivator. We have ignored this in discussions of wage rates and job rotation. . . . Job rotation is not job enrichment; you are saying, in effect, "We will let you out of jail if you're a good kid."

— In collaborating on job redesign, you have to deal with the worker's and supervisor's fears about what will happen to their status and future.

— "I don't have enough time" usually means that the work is laid out wrong.

— Jobs decay and get worse because of, among other things, fragmentation, job specifications, overtraining, measurement schemes, and deskilling (reducing the amount of preparation and orientation needed to do the job).

— Times have changed. What was a good challenge for an 11th grader in 1940 is not in 1970, but the job may not have been redesigned in the intervening 30 years.

— "We keep trying to sweeten up the relationship between the supervisor and the worker. The problem isn't there; it's in the work. . . . When the work is right and you know how it's laid out, people have time to be pleasant to each other. . . . Don't worry about having supervisors love their people. If people love their work, you'll get in on it free."

Mr. Ford emphasized repeatedly that *the way in which change is brought about* is more important than the specific details of job redesign: those involved in doing and supervising the work must arrive at their own decisions about the changes to be made, and take joint responsibility for putting these changes into effect. An important ingredient for success, therefore, is some form of *worker participation.*

Other Examples of Job Enrichment

David Whitsett, of Motivation Systems, offered an example from his experience with a claims-processing operation in an insurance company that illustrated the same principles. The workflow had been set up in such a way that the types of claims were sorted by individual work stations so that each clerk dealt most of the time with only one kind of claim application. And if any problems arose in individual cases, these were referred to supervision for handling. The assumption, following traditional industrial principles, was that if the work were categorized and the basic

claims-processing job simplified, the highest possible productivity and lowest error rates would be obtained. Yet there were production and quality problems and much job dissatisfaction in the group.

The redesign effort began by analyzing all the types of claims being processed, from the simplest to the most complex, and by specifying what a worker would need to know to handle each type. It was discovered that many of the women processing the claims already had the necessary knowledge to handle these more complex types of claims. As a result, everything possible was put into the content of the jobs at the lowest level, including resolving of problems with the customer and taking care of difficulties that had previously been referred to a higher level. Mr. Whitsett told how these recommendations for change were regarded by work methods specialists in the company and what results were obtained when the changes were made in spite of their objections:

> The methods people said, "You will lower productivity: they will make more mistakes because no one is checking their work. People won't like these jobs because they don't want complex jobs, and they will quit." . . . The results were that gross productivity remained the same, but net productivity was up because errors went down. Customer complaints dropped off because the girls handled their own complaints rather than bucking them to the boss. And turnover, absenteeism, and lateness dropped.

Still another example, from experience in a public mental hospital in Pennsylvania, was described by Michael Johnson (Pennsylvania's AFL-CIO). In this instance the enrichment was made with the job of attendant. Ninety-five percent of the attendants were black, and the work was regarded as the lowest status and worst paid employment in the local area. A training program on the job stressed professionalism, the attendant's responsibility for the patient, his therapeutic role, and recognition of his importance to the success of hospital operations. Results included sharp reduction in turnover, absenteeism, pilfering of hospital property, and abuse or neglect of patients. Costs per patient day went down, and food and other aspects of institutional care improved. Attendants started informal groups to involve the more withdrawn patients in activities. And when a new collective bargaining agreement was negotiated, a clause in the contract stated that the attendant is responsible for the patient.

All of the examples concerned the redesign of individual jobs or jobs of a similar type within existing organizations, with little or no change in the surrounding organizational structure or other aspects of the work environment. The conference also discussed redesign efforts and other types of planned change that focused on larger units: departments, divisions, occasionally total plants, and in some instances the community and its institutions such as education and government.

The Systems Approach: Focus on the Organization

An overview of what is being done at the departmental, plant, or organizational level — so far only in a small number of firms — was provided by Fred Foulkes of the Harvard School of Business Administration. He described the use of work improvement principles in new plants and in rearrangements of existing organizations. "Less than 50 companies, and probably more like 40, have as yet done anything like this," Mr. Foulkes said, adding that the instances he knew about were for the most part in nonunion firms. He mentioned five examples of new plants: a General Foods plant in Topeka, Kansas (described in greater detail at Williamsburg and summarized below); Olin and Procter and Gamble plants in Augusta; Corning Glass and Polaroid facilities in Massachusetts. Each new plant is conceived of as both a social and a technological system, in which those who are to be involved in operating the plant participate as early as possible in the design and development of the facility and share in the determination of work arrangements, the content of individual jobs, and the development of personnel and compensation policies. Other common features include:

— Dispensing with time clocks.

— The building of work teams for operations problemsolving and planning.

— Much time devoted to meetings and coffee sessions for goalsetting and exchange of information.

— The design of jobs to maximize the chances for personal involvement and organizational cohesiveness.

All this leads to the individual employee's being encouraged to exercise his initiative — taking action based on circumstances at the time and his knowledge of the business and checking less with higher authority. In these new plants the compensation system is also apt to be constructed or adapted to reduce the number of job classifications and provide more meaningful promotions. Usually those who are going to *run* the plant also *plan* it (both social and technical aspects) with an outside consultant skilled in group dynamics and organizational development. And they usually have the advantage of being insulated from the traditional climate and practices of the parent organization (although problems can arise after the plant is operating when people transfer in from the parent company, who have not had the experience of developing the plant from scratch).

In the second type of systems approach — dealing with already existing organizations — Mr. Foulkes mentioned a few of the various techniques that have been tried. Such redesign or modification programs, he said, typically begin in the personnel department or in training, work

simplification, or engineering staff groups, but line management support and active involvement are required for success.

Job rotation is one of the approaches used, sometimes with a "sandwich" plan in which some time is spent on the current job and some on the next job. When a person has adapted to the new job and has learned it, he often is reluctant to return to his previous assignment. Thus job rotation may be a kind of one-way street, and the company still has the problem of filling the entry-level or less interesting jobs.

Another variant is to run a jobposting or internal bidding system in which openings, "career exposure plans," are announced and people bid on new jobs.

Vertical job enlargement is still another approach; this involves more of a systems focus than lateral enlargement or enrichment because levels of responsibility may be combined and supervisory as well as worker responsibilities change.

The main conclusions from these types of redesign programs, according to Mr. Foulkes, are:

— The restructuring should be accompanied by or anchored in an organizational development program, including changes in management attitudes and practices.

— There are some barriers to innovation: resistance from some employees who don't want more challenging jobs; general organizational policies or existing practices that conflict with the new approach; technological difficulties (though these are less than often supposed); and management resistance. (The manager or supervisor, for example, may wonder what his role would be if employees were given increased responsibility and more power to make decisions.)

The key ingredients for success appear to be:

— Top management support and active involvement.

— The use of consultants or change agents, both internal and external to the organization.

— Some early success experiences to build confidence and encourage continued experimentation.

— A commitment to the new approach as a way of life, not just a gimmick (here day-to-day company actions and other nonverbal communications are apt to outweigh verbal statements of intent and other programmatic fanfare).

The main current need that Mr. Foulkes sees is an intensive effort to get more such approaches going in both new and existing situations in a much larger number of firms, particularly unionized firms. To meet com-

petition and deal with rising costs, some of these approaches should be tried, he suggested.

Yet, *more significant is the damage to the quality of life caused by dull and demeaning work,* while in other community institutions people are seeking to take more initiative and exercise more freedom, Mr. Foulkes said. Regarding the enormity of the problem, he said: "There are some 2.4 million dead-end jobs, with little chance to exercise judgment or to advance."[7]

In conclusion, Mr. Foulkes said:

> Employee expectations are indeed changing. Eighty percent of the people at AT&T hired last year were born after World War II. [Managements] are losing their right to be arbitrary, and that includes the arbitrary assignment of work to people.

Later discussion at the conference took sharp issue with some of Mr. Foulkes' generalizations. Mr. Whitsett, for example, said that six of 14 recent programs in which he has been involved were in *unionized* plants; and that when existing arrangements are being altered in this broader scale approach, unions are and will be involved more often than not. The real issue raised by Mr. Foulkes' remarks was broader, and did not surface until there was a general discussion later in the meeting of both the job-centered and organization-centered efforts to change work content. As reported below, the issue of union and management attitudes and motives in either advocating or resisting job enrichment or a systems approach to organizational change became a focus of considerable debate.

The General Foods Topeka Plant

First, however, one session of the conference was spent in a more detailed presentation of a development program in a new continuous-process-technology Pet Foods plant in Topeka designed and installed by General Foods in ways intended to challenge traditional industrial practice. The project is noteworthy in that the final plant design was a product of two years of intensive planning with major inputs from social as well as physical and engineering specialists.

Lyman Ketchum and Edward Dulworth of General Foods outlined the assumptions underlying the design and development of the new plant's technology and social organization. Mr. Ketchum, formerly Pet Foods

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[7]In the Sheppard study, two-thirds of the male blue-collar workers saw little or no chance to get ahead on their current job. This does not mean, however, that these workers were all upset by their limited mobility chances. Among those stating little or no chance to get ahead, 45 percent were rarely or never bothered by their restricted chances.

operations manager, and now manager of organization development-operations at the company's headquarters, launched the design-development effort for the new Topeka facility and at an early stage brought aboard Mr. Dulworth, who headed the development team, a job assignment changed to plant manager as the new facility moved from planning and construction into operation. Through previous participation in a human relations laboratory training session, Mr. Ketchum had been impressed with the organizational development approach. Accordingly, he obtained approval to try considerable innovation in organizing the new Topeka plant through several stages of planning and design discussions. He took some additional specialized training in techniques of planned change; then he and the core team began to work with Richard Walton, an organizational development consultant now at the Harvard School of Business Administration, in developing both the physical and social systems of the plant.

Ideally, the project leader should be picked before design begins, Mr. Ketchum said. To fill that position he looked within General Foods for candidates with traits such as *risktaker, innovator, high interpersonal skills, generalist, personally secure, bright, with a record of accomplishment and the ability to involve others and to take the company into a new community. Engineering or production management experience would be helpful, but not top priority.* Mr. Dulworth met all the personal criteria and had the technical experience as well. After he was picked, he was given the freedom to choose other members of the core team from the company's existing Pet Foods plant in Kankakee, Illinois.

Mr. Ketchum, Mr. Dulworth, and the project team were guided by assumptions such as these, developed in their early sessions with the consultant:

— Success of the enterprise depends on its members having a feeling of participation in and identification with the organization.

— For this sense of identification to occur, attention must be given not only to the *physical design* of the plant but also to its *organizational structure* so as to maximize employees' chances to exercise independent and collaborative judgment in the operation of the physical system.

— Employees will be more productive when they have high feelings of self-worth and of identification with the success of the total enterprise.

These and similar guidelines were applied by the project team at every step of the design and development of the plant. This resulted, among other things, in a production operation that maximized opportunities for collaboration of work teams and interchange between jobs, and in a com-

pensation system intended to relate wages and salaries closely to individual contributions as well as to provide clear routes for progress.

Production efficiencies are expected to be greater in Topeka than in Kankakee, Mr. Dulworth said, not only because of the new plant and equipment but also as a result of the way the Topeka facility is organized and operated.[8] The operation is still new, and the work force has just passed a total of 70 toward an ultimate strength of 120 when the plant is operating at full capacity. There is no union in the Topeka plant, though there is in Kankakee. But is the absence of a union really an indispensable condition for success?

Mr. Ketchum and Mr. Dulworth presented for the participants' consideration a three-column chart (see pages 19-23) that was designed to show the relationships of certain assumptions about human potentials and of organization (system) characteristics to selected favorable business conditions, the purpose of which is to clarify the essential attributes of the "sociotechnical" environment considered necessary for a successful effort to design and operate a new work environment from scratch.

Production Versus People?

The General Foods example, together with the other instances of job enlargement and organizational development that have been described, provoked some sharp questioning and reactions from various conference participants.

One feeling expressed was that conflict exists between (1) designing for job fulfillment or satisfaction and (2) designing for productivity and profit, or, as some put it, "the ethical versus the business approach." Sidney A. Fine from the Upjohn Institute was one of those taking this position:

> Companies haven't jumped on this idea of job enrichment because there's a fundamental conflict between production and people.

Jerome Rosow, drawing on his pregovernment experience as an oil company executive, gave a more detailed and qualified statement of this position:

> The industrial organization doesn't start with the individual. It starts with the process or the function being performed. Top management is not going to mess with this business of job redesign and so on unless

[8]The experience of Procter and Gamble in using new job and organizational development methods to start new plants is worth noting here. In its six new plants set up in the last 10 years, P&G has operated with 10 to 50 percent less overhead and operating costs, holding technology constant.

Relationships of Human Potentials and Certain System Characteristics to Selected Favorable Business Conditions

Selected favorable business conditions	*Human potentials and predispositions*	*Certain system characteristics*
Pet foods are socially acceptable or desirable products, and GF has a good image; therefore, employees can readily identify with the particular product and the employing firm.	People want to be able to identify with products that they produce and firms that employ them. People care about things (especially quality) with which they can identify.	Opportunity to identify personally with enterprise product, relationship in market, dry product team, Topeka, and GF.
The business allows for relatively stable employment minimizing this type of insecurity as a source of distrust and friction between employees and management.	People have certain "security" needs. They want reasonable income and employment security, and want to be assured against arbitrary and unfair treatment. They want to be assured of "due process."	Stabilized employment by guaranteed weeks of work. Team members as participants rather than subordinates. Constructive counseling as the method of control — not termination or disciplinary layoff.
No power groups that create an antimanagement posture will exist within the organization.		

(continued)

Selected favorable business conditions	*Human potentials and predispositions*	*Certain system characteristics*
		Above community average pay to assure employment selectivity.
	Tools and resources are within grasp, and the ability to accomplish is present in the project team.	Unusually rigorous screening and testing in recruitment. Use of State Employment Service and wide participation by project team and supervisors.
Management has made available the additional time, and the project team is investing the extra energy necessary to initiate an innovative system of this type.		
The size of work unit is small enough to allow individual recognition and identification.		Flexible manpower assignments between teams.
		Encouragement of innovation by individual employees through broad job knowledge and limited work constraints.
	An individual has a need to be able to see himself as a significant part of the whole — be it his position in a human group or his role in a complex technology.	Broad job classifications/job enlargement combining quality control, maintenance, and operating functions.
		Teamleaders function as people

There is a relatively self-contained technical administrative system.

People have social needs. They enjoy team membership and teamwork. At the same time, they enjoy friendly rivalry.

The technology calls for and will permit a high level of communications among members of work teams.

managers rather than superoperators.

Teambuilding and teamwork through teamleader guidance.

Participation in establishing and changing work rules and participation in decisionmaking processes.

Team effort eliciting high individual performance.

Encouragement of team targetsetting for current performance.

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Application to Topeka Plant

Requisite favorable business conditions	*Human potentials and predispositions assumed to be available in the employees recruited*	*Characteristics to be designed into the Topeka system*
The technology and processes in this business do provide significant ways in which human attitudes and motivation can affect quality and cost; therefore, because the organization more fully utilizes human potentials of employees, it can pay off in dollars and cents		Minimum work force and lean management structure. Design and layout improvements utilized which allow concentration on more meaningful elements of job. Daily self-measurement techniques for cost/yield spoilage. A style of management encouraging people to participate, making them more flexible and responsive to change — both internal and external.
The system is to be introduced into a new plant; thus, we won't have to change customs or deeply ingrained	People have ego needs. They want self-esteem, sense of accomplishment, autonomy, increasing knowledge and skill, and data on their performance. People invest more in	Information system which supports decentralized decisionmaking. Responsibility at the action level of the organization.

expectations on the part of employees.

situations which allow them to meet these needs.

Mature treatment of employees (no time clocks).

Few symbols that differentiate hierarchical level of office and plant.

Broader educational and personal improvement opportunities.

System to encourage individual goalsetting.

23. There is relatively high physical isolation between Topeka and other parts of the firm. This facilitates the development of unique organizational patterns and climate.

Employee advancement by merit. Single job classification with grade-level progression and above-average opportunities to master multiple skills.

they have a problem. They will spend a lot more time on questions about capital investment than on human resource management. It's only within recent years that the vice president for industrial relations has gotten a hearing, and that's been in crisis situations.

But this was not a popular position at the conference, nor one that was left unchallenged. Furthermore, it may be illustrative of the trap of either-or conceptualization. It came under attack from several directions. Mr. Whitsett, for example, citing his example of the insurance claims processors, insisted that the results of job redesign and enrichment in that case had resulted in both improved performance *and* greater worker satisfaction "by any measure you want to name." Mr. Ketchum said, in taking the same position, "My fundamental premise is that you've got to optimize a lot of things to get overall success of the business — not just being nice to people, not just job redesign. There's no *necessary* conflict between doing right by people and success. . . . But if you *don't* do these things [design for higher participation and more rewarding work content] alienation will put you out of business."

Louis E. Davis also disputed Mr. Fine's assertion and the implication of what Mr. Rosow was saying, but for different reasons. His view was that the either-or question is not a useful one because it skips over the complex relationship between the physical technology and the social system in a work organization. His position began to be expressed in this exchange:

Mr. Fine: The tendency of big technology is to homogenize tasks. This reduces the amount of training needed, and makes supervision and quality control easier. That's what led to work simplification.

Mr. Davis: That's not a result of technology. *That's a result of managerial choice.* You can have a different organization structure and life style with the same technology. . . . [The way the equipment and the workflow is designed] makes assumptions about people and how they will interact. In most process industries these decisions are not made by management. Management doesn't realize it has choices.

"People versus profit" was attacked on other grounds by Robert Kanter, a professor of labor education — and a former UAW staff member — and before that a factory worker. Stating the issue this way, he said, carries "the implication that workers have no interest in the efficiency or success of the business." Mr. Maccoby also attacked what he viewed as cynicism about management's attitude:

Managers are human, and take a great deal of pride in making people on the lowest level feel better. I've seen jobs changed and enriched *without* the economic pressure to do so.

He saw the issue not as people versus profit, but as a tendency to effect change through expressing noble intentions rather than carrying through the detailed preparation, planning, and followup needed to achieve real improvement in work practices and job content — a point also emphasized by Mr. Ford.

> Often these efforts are poorly planned, though they are idealistic and announced with a lot of fanfare. If you can't offer more than pious hopes, and the effort fails, the natural reaction is, "They're only interested in productivity." We don't yet know what we should do about how to bring these things off successfully, especially in situations where a lot is at stake.

Other Approaches: Training and New Careers

In addition to job redesign and organizational development to enhance the content and meaning of work experience, other approaches are needed and have been tried. Not all jobs can be enriched, some of the conferees felt. These unimprovable jobs are often the only ones open to prospective employees who come to the company door with minimal skills and experience — "the disadvantaged." Allen R. Janger reported on a new study of these workers and their experience in industry just completed by The Conference Board. The study was to describe company practices and experience in employing such workers. Some 2,300 companies were surveyed, and special studies were made of a smaller number of firms. Definitions of "the disadvantaged" have varied with changes in guidelines for federal programs in this field, but a worker falling into this category would likely have some combination of the following characteristics: minimal education, minimal job skills or experience, membership in a racial minority, residence in a ghetto area.

The basic problem of people with all such handicaps in whatever combination is to find employment in companies that can provide security in terms of steady work and fringe benefits. Other barriers faced by such workers may include difficulties in getting to work because of poor transportation, physical or mental handicaps, and needs for some specialized formal training before being able to function on the job. "This is a group that often cannot adapt to existing company intake procedures," Mr. Janger added. "Companies will have to modify their intake, training, processing, and upgrading procedures." This, he went on to say, affects the climate of the total firm; "the organization is ultimately of one piece."

Thus special efforts to accommodate the organization to more employment opportunity for the previously unemployable is another factor leading to greater attention to the subject of job content and the quality of on-the-job experience. Since some jobs cannot be redesigned effectively,

either because of inflexible requirements based on the nature of the operation or because of the low adaptability (without special training) of the people likely to be in the jobs, one approach is to provide enough training and other special services to make a change to a more desirable job possible. This point was made by Mr. Fishman and Mr. Whitsett, among others.

> Mr. Whitsett: Since the disadvantaged are often placed in the most undesirable jobs, there's the problem of making these jobs palatable. These jobs are often the ones that are candidates for automation. Sometimes the inducement is offered to go to the company school, and then be able to move to a more desirable job.
>
> Mr. Fishman: There are many jobs you can't make interesting. They're just dull, stupid jobs. So let's try to do it in a way that lets the guy keep his dignity. And there's no reason why a guy has to stay on a job 20 years. You can't seem to get companies to understand that they should build in mobility.

Supplementary training of this kind is the focus of one program initiated by the Steelworkers and described at the conference by Bruce Alexander. It began with a paragraph in the 1965 industrywide steel contract providing that the companies would cooperate with the union in manpower development and training. Under existing manpower training and development programs, federal funds were made available.

The need for this effort was created by the realization that, for thousands of workers, low educational levels were blocking anything beyond minimal promotion opportunities. Such essential skills as being able to use a micrometer or read a blueprint were beyond these people at the bottom of the pile. Schools were set up in the plants, available only outside of working hours but with everything provided. The program guaranteed to raise its students, if they followed the program conscientiously, a total of four grade levels in 125 hours of instruction. Mr. Alexander summarized the results as follows:

> We found that people's progress made a difference in their homelife and in the community, as well as on the job. Some 17,000 completed the first round, and 18,500 will have gone through the second round. This is in places like Chicago, Baltimore, and Birmingham, and therefore with a high percentage of black applicants. Our next cut will be to work with the employee who doesn't even have enough literacy to successfully apply for the job.

Second Careers and Midcareer Development

One additional approach to work fulfillment also bridges industry and the community: programs and services to enable people to move into *new*

occupations and new types of work organizations.[9] A pilot program in the late 1960's at Columbia University, sponsored by a Ford Foundation grant, was described at the conference by Alan Entine.[10] This program enabled people seeking to enter new careers to get needed specialized training at the university, as well as counseling and placement services. Partial tuition support was also provided. Interest was tremendous and kept growing. "Thousands phoned and wrote in asking about what they could do. The inquiries are still coming, even though the program had to be discontinued two years ago," Mr. Entine said. "The number of calls rose during the week, reaching a peak on Friday afternoon as work frustrations built up."

Work fulfillment through second and even third careers should be available as an option, both because of its psychic value to the persons concerned and as a source of needed recruits for many professional and service jobs in health, education, and other community service.

But for this to happen, said Mr. Entine, some adjustments and special resources are needed. For example, professional associations will need to adjust their criteria for entrance so that people in middle years who do not need so long a professional training period will be able to make the transition more readily. Neither should it be necessary for all training to occur on campus in a conventional classroom or laboratory setting. Much could be done to make educational resources more readily available through television, home study via extension programs, and similar mechanisms.

It is clear that only the tip of the iceberg of new careers interest is showing. There are, for example, between 30 and 40 million people involved in some kind of continuing education, many in fields unrelated to their present employment. It should be possible, as is beginning to happen in Europe, to provide for educational leaves and midlife training opportunities with some form of subsidy, to be made available not only to academics and other professionals but to white- and blue-collar workers.

This again related to a dual finding from the Upjohn Institute research on worker satisfaction: people in dead-end jobs were more prone to be interested in a job or career change, and fully a third of those adult workers with second career desires thought that unions and management were doing too much for minorities — compared to only one-sixth of all other adult workers. Clearly, we are dealing here with a syndrome that requires more than casual acknowledgment and detached indifference.

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[9]Sheppard and Herrick, *op. cit.*, chapter entitled "The Emerging Pattern of Second Careers."

[10]His experience is also presented in the Sheppard and Herrick book.

Henry G. Pearson of Polaroid noted that some of the pressure for changing careers would be alleviated if companies paid more attention to career development opportunities *within* the firm. In any case, Mr. Entine had said earlier, "We have to provide ways for people to change because not all of the answers can come from upgrading where people are."[11] The needed institutional changes flowing from this observation are tremendous.

Some companies do provide resources for training toward new jobs and careers either within the organization or elsewhere. Philip D. Moore of General Electric, for example, cited an individual development program in his company that is a tuition-refund plan to aid preparation for a career change in the event of layoff. Now this has been supplemented by an individual development program. If an employee wants to explore a new career opportunity, even if he is still on the job at GE, the company will pay $400 toward his training costs.

How Big a Problem Is the Work Itself?

By the end of the second day the conference had moved from discussing the types of problems on the job into considering the various programs designed to alleviate these problems. But the discussion was not focused or cumulative. The people around the table made speeches rather than building upon each other's remarks. There were complaints of "we're not listening to each other," and "the discussion has been too vague and unspecific." There were many remarks on a high level of abstraction that had a tilting-with-windmills quality — for example, the exchanges regarding people versus profit, discussed above.

Union representatives present, to a man, kept saying that other factors are as important as or more important than the content of the job in understanding and improving workers' situations today.

> Mr. Fishman: You can't separate job enrichment from other issues such as job changes, promotions, relief time, and the pace of the line. All of these are noneconomic issues.
>
> Mr. Wallick: Health and safety and transportation to and from the job are also related to satisfaction. You've got to deal with the total situation. One reason a lot of workers feel alienated is because of the

[11]Mr. Sheppard's research showed that nearly 30 percent would take upgrading training to get a better job *somewhere else*. And the lower the task level (defined in terms of degree of variety, autonomy, and responsibility), the higher the proportion expressing such a choice.

kind of total environment these people have to live in: the factory environment, which is degrading, and the urban environment. A lot of what people call bigotry among blue-collar ethnics is that a lot are living in the path of racial migration. It's easy to be a liberal in the suburbs. It's harder if you see your schools going downhill and property taxes up. It's a very serious problem. I don't think that our organization [UAW] understands it; most of industry does not understand it; nor do many academics understand it.

Mr. Gotbaum: If you build up the question of job satisfaction as the key question, you're making a great mistake. You have to look at the other things bugging the guy. . . . I don't want to say that job satisfaction is not significant, but you have to put it in the context of a lot of other factors.

Some of these factors, Victor Gotbaum (head of New York City's American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees) went on to say, are what his paycheck will buy in terms of groceries, how much status the amount he earns gives him on the block, the nastiness and confusion of the Vietnam war, and the lack of respect from his children.

Mr. Johnson returned to the same theme at the session that evening:

Worker dissatisfaction can be caused by a lot of things, not the least of which is compensation. . . . It's not recognized here that the worker doesn't stop living when he leaves the plant. Does life style originate in the plant, or are attitudes developed outside? You have to know the situation of his family and the community. You can't make the assumption that if we could only find a way to talk to the worker he would change his life style.

Voices rose and tempers became sharper at this point. No one, some participants argued, had suggested that other things are not important, *but the conference happened to be on the subject of life work and job content.* Arthur Turner said mildly, but pointedly:

It's kind of silly to debate if the intrinsic nature of work is important. It obviously is. So what's all the heat about?

Mitchell Sviridoff of The Ford Foundation (once a top union official) suggested that the persistent theme of the union representatives' comments indicated their uneasiness with the drift of the discussion — with "the" problem being stated by management people, largely supported by the academics present — and that most of the solutions proposed were coming from the management side, with implied antiunion attitudes behind the job improvement initiatives that had been reported at the meet-

ing. His remarks brought out explicitly the nature of the conference deadlock.

> The anxiety here reveals that union representatives are clearly suspicious of an analysis that challenges the fundamental precepts of the trade union movement. . . . When you suggest that the basic problem has to do with the nature of the job and the way the plant is structured, rather than wages, fringes, and other things basic to the bargaining process, then union representatives understandably get nervous.

Mr. Johnson had said as much earlier in the day:

> Maybe we have some of the wrong union guys here. For us it's been a real learning process. But it would be harder for a contract bargainer to swallow this. General Foods says a program like this [job enrichment-organizational development] obviates the need for a union. I have the feeling it could be sold best to nonunion employers. Then there would be a stiffening of union leadership. It's valuable to management for the profit and health of the organization. Bob Ford dramatically demonstrated this with his training and turnover figures. So when management promotes this, unions have to be suspicious.

And Mr. Kanter made a related point:

> Unions have difficulty in talking about these work environment issues with management. Therefore they take the negative approach: "If we make the problems arising out of this costly enough, management will listen."

He gave as an example the strategy by which the $100 monthly pension was first gained for UAW workers. When this was first put on the table, management was adamantly opposed. The unions then proposed that the companies make up the difference between Social Security payments and $100 a month. Soon the companies were in Washington with the union testifying in favor of increases in Social Security allowances.

In any case, said Mr. Kanter, experience on the job *is* important:

> Work is one-third of a person's waking life. It has a lot to do with his image of himself and his place in society. The kind of job he has puts him at a certain level relative to others, regardless of what it pays. It's the self-image that changes when you change the nature of the work.

Mr. Sheppard and Mr. Herrick spoke to this issue:

> Mr. Sheppard: We're all in favor of higher income and more job security. The point is that a lot of research has shown that the nature

of the job is also important. The nature of the job a guy has also affects how he lives and votes. People in lousy jobs tend to be more alienated from both the company and the union, and to vote for Wallace.[12]

Mr. Herrick: We don't have to worry about what's *most* important. The point is that job satisfaction and job fulfillment have been *under*-emphasized by *everyone* — companies, unions, academics, and government!

On the final morning of the conference, Mr. Fishman had the last word on the subject of "defensiveness":

The labor guys here aren't defensive, but we do feel like the blacks. White America has suddenly become cognizant. You academic, business, and government people are discovering what we've known all along — that blue-collar workers have legitimate problems — and we'd better find out more about what they are.

This indeed was the original reason for the Upjohn Institute study and the conference itself.

But the real last (but *non*defensive) word came from Mr. Herrick's comments on the Department of Labor's *Working Conditions Survey* and on his special study of corporation presidents, middle managers, international union presidents, shop stewards — and of *workers themselves:*

Among 23 items covering all aspects of work, a national sample of workers ranked four "work-itself" items at the top: (1) interesting work, (2) enough help and equipment to get the job done, (3) enough information to get the job done, and (4) enough authority to do the job. *"Good pay" ranked only in fifth place,* and that was followed by "an opportunity to develop my special abilities." When union leaders and workers were asked what elements of work needed improvement most, union leaders ranked pay first and job content last or next to last. Both blue- and white-collar workers ranked job content above pay with white-collar workers placing job content first and blue-collar workers ranking pay last.[13]

That is, *workers themselves* cite intrinsic job content attributes as factors in their work that deserve attention. This does *not* mean that income is irrelevant!

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[12]The reader is once again referred to Sheppard and Herrick, *op. cit.*, Chapter 5, for some pinpointed analysis of the effects of "work itself" among *economically secure* blue-collar workers.

[13]*Ibid.*, Chapter 12, for a detailed discussion by Mr. Herrick of management, union, and worker attitudes toward the content of work.

Strategies for Improving the Workplace: Costs and Benefits

As the talk turned more to strategies for change and improvement in the latter stages of the conference, controversy of two kinds arose. One point for debate was whether methods for improving the quality of work experience should concentrate on *individual* jobs or job categories, or whether instead the approach should emphasize *work systems, work groups,* and the development of the organization as a whole. Stanley Seashore (The University of Michigan) summed up the difference of opinion this way:

> If we focus on improving a particular job, that is, the relation between a person and his particular duties, you can get results of one kind or another. In contrast to this is the notion of dealing with whole systems of jobs, interrelated by promotional sequences or around multiple tasks, and limiting your concern to the set of tasks one person does as being less important.

The problem of how to proceed is complicated by the almost total failure to develop complete and realistic cost data on the two approaches, Mr. Seashore continued. Even without dramatic increases in productivity following a job redesign or organizational development program, side benefits (such as less scrap, lower turnover and hence less training costs, more flexibility in job assignments, and acquisition of broader skills) can accrue without being noticed.

The whole debate about costs struck some as sterile and timewasting. To these members of the conference the desirability of improving work-life quality *as an end in itself* was obvious, and would quickly pay for itself directly and indirectly. "If we sit here and talk about whether it's more costly [to put in job enrichment], we might as well adjourn," one conferee grumbled.

Mr. Davis, a persistent advocate of the organizational approach, said that the matter of redesigning *individual* jobs no longer held interest for him. He drew attention to large-scale problems such as:

- — The social and organizational implications of a particular design of plant technology.
- — Lack of congruence between engineers' designs and managements' objectives.
- — The meaning of work under high technology conditions when most of the effort expended is in diagnostic judgment and work groupings are fluid.
- — The problem of diffusing and getting wider experimentation with what is already known.

But few wanted to approach work improvement strategy on this level. Instead, as discussion turned to recommendations for change and institutional approaches to improving the quality of work, most participants focused on the enlargement, enrichment, or redesign of individual jobs, and a parallel emphasis on person-centered approaches such as training and new careers. Some remarks by Mr. Pearson seemed to express the majority view:

> There's been a lot of consensus here on three points: *First,* people are alienated; and *second,* some of it is due to their work; and *third,* there are some bad jobs. The problem is that each company or work establishment has to work on job enrichment in ways that are right for it — there are different conditions elsewhere. . . . And we need to put concepts into four- and five-letter words that managers, foremen, and employees can understand. They can buy the idea that there are bad jobs — that they don't give consideration to human factors. Hal Sheppard's findings show what these things are. People want change, movement, interaction with other people, being able to see the end product, choices, learning, and growth. In promotion, *these concepts can be sold, like we've sold health, safety, and hire-the-handicapped.*

Institutional Approaches to Improving the Quality of Work

On the final morning of the conference more concentrated attention was devoted to desirable next steps, both *within* the separate institutions represented at the meeting (business, labor, academic researchers, and government) and *among* the various interested groups, in some kinds of joint ventures that might be particularly appropriate because of the scope and complexity of the issues involved.

The *industrial management representatives* present all said in one way or another that companies need to take action, but how much and what kind were less clear. And some roadblocks and unknowns seem to be strewn on the road ahead. Robert Middlekauff from the Ford Motor Company made these comments at the end of the meeting:

> We don't have the answer. But it's clear that we're dealing with the consequences of lack of job content and enrichment. Absenteeism has doubled in the last 10 years; so has turnover; and disciplinary cases have perhaps more than doubled. Until the midsixties management has not had to be concerned with what I would have to refer to as the people problem. Union attention has been directed to getting people away from work, rather than improving the work, through such means as the shorter workweek, earlier retirement, and

more relief time. Most management people would think a Herzberg was a city where they manufacture rental cars.

Industry is basically wary because it's locked into some work processes by technology that is heavily capitalized. It takes lots of money to design, install, or rearrange the equipment and the line. Yet ways of structuring the work are substantially the same as they were 10 years ago, when management considered them satisfactory. With workers' reactions and behavior now unacceptable, and work conditions essentially the same, what has made the difference? *The plant is a piece of the society. The worker now has new expectations and choices* — more leisure — other kinds of jobs available. There's something about the nature of work that we have to deal with. But I'm leery of it because I don't know how much will be enough, or what the costs will be.

Unions are beginning to bargain work environment and quality-of-worklife issues along with the traditional items such as wages and fringe benefits. But, as was noted earlier, those union representatives present at Williamsburg were quick to say, except for Mr. Gotbaum, that they did not represent the part of union leadership with bargaining responsibility. One member of this group said outside the meeting itself that the conference had revealed:

> . . . there are real legitimate differences of interest here. Organized labor has to take the lead in a way that makes things happen from below, so that [the job enlargement trend] won't be a new Taylorism.

Academic people drew attention to the problem of finding better ways to disseminate the findings of research and their implications. Mr. Turner remarked wryly:

> . . . it seems academic people are literally incapable of communicating in any effective way except by means of writing books and making speeches at each other on this subject. . . .

Mr. Sheppard agreed:

> We are prisoners of the 18th century notion that if you have something to say you put it in a book; and at best, pray that some decision-makers will read it and act upon its applied implications.

Mr. Davis took a harder line:

> We have to go back to lesson one with managers and union leaders. We must break up the concrete of the conventional wisdom that evolved from the industrial era. And we have to diffuse the learnings that have taken place, not only in terms of examples, which can be misleading, but in terms of the assumptions and generalizations made in each instance. [These questions] have to be raised to the

level of public debate. The quality of working life is too important to be left to managements and unions alone.

Mr. Rosow discussed current and prospective *government* interests in the field of improving the quality of work. In a recent paper for the President he had sketched a threefold problem in the area of worklife. One aspect is *economic* — the issue of take-home pay and what it will buy. This is certainly important, though far from the whole story, but in a sense it creates the other problems. These are: the *situation in the workplace itself,* and the *quality of life* at home and in the community. These three kinds of problems are interacting in the lives of many workers. The response to George Wallace can be seen in a statement that they felt themselves to be politically voiceless, and sought to create awareness of their plight.

As vice chairman of the National Productivity Commission, to convene in June 1971, Mr. Rosow planned to propose a fund for retraining of displaced workers or those in a career change by choice or necessity. He suggested to the conference that it would be good if this fund included support from industry as well. Instead of going to income maintenance, the money might be used for lump-sum payments or long-term loans, increasing the chances that these resources would be used at least in part to acquire new or more advanced skills. The vetoed 1970 Manpower Bill contained a title dealing with midcareer training as well; this legislation may be revived.

More significant, however, are the implications for manpower and job development that come out of pending welfare legislation. With the emphasis on stronger motivation of those who can work to seek jobs to become gainfully employed, an effort is being made to reduce the rapidly rising welfare rolls. But all such potential workers, until now not counted in the employment census, will henceforth be sampled. The most immediate result may be a jump in the unemployment rate of as much as 2 percent. And to make this back-to-work movement take hold, attention will have to be given to more supplementary training and workplace improvements.

Who Does What?

Mr. Herrick summarized a proposal which had been circulated in advance of the meeting for institutional approaches to improving the quality of work. This paper called for joint action by industry, unions, government, foundations, and universities on a variety of fronts:

— Channeling technological change in the direction of humanizing work.

— Applying new technology to bad jobs — either to automate them or make them more worthwhile.

— Education in work-fulfillment techniques for a much wider number of consultants, and increasing the repertoire of those already in the field.

— Consultative help, particularly to smaller employers.

— Promotion of work-fulfillment techniques and concepts by publications and other means.

— More emphasis on work-content issues in collective bargaining. (About half the unions have bargained along related issues, but the matter needs attention at the international union level. There is no evidence that the AFL-CIO — the federation of international unions — sees quality-of-work issues as a goal or need.)

Comments on Mr. Herrick's proposal were solicited from government, industry, and union representatives at the conference.

Charles E. Odell from the U.S. Department of Labor felt that real progress cannot be achieved until management and labor jointly show workers the rights and benefits that will result from job enlargement and associated training. Furthermore, employers and unions need to convince educational institutions that training opportunities must actually be available. Mr. Odell did not address himself very much to any activist role by government, which was a major theme of Mr. Herrick's proposal. For Mr. Odell, government must not be too much in the middle here. It might seek a neutralist, facilitating role "but could turn out to be a heavy-footed Big Brother, with both sides throwing rocks." The main problem, Mr. Odell concluded, "is reaching the worker on the job and convincing him that job enrichment is to his interest." The government, apparently, should not do the "reaching." In the case of bargaining on pre-retirement education at Scovill and Chrysler, the union (UAW) felt at a disadvantage when sitting down to talk about a formally-sponsored employer program. Yet without joint sponsorship, the program would not get worker credibility or participation.

The traditional management-labor arm's-length situation of the bargaining table had to be overcome. Both sides realized that credibility would depend on what they could *both* do to structure and deliver the program. Mr. Odell thought that this experience might be a precedent for trying to improve the content of work experience elsewhere. But to repeat, Mr. Odell, as a government representative, was reluctant to advocate a more positive role by government.

John Moore, a member of Scovill management, thought that the theme and the cause of improving the quality of worklife, as discussed at the

Williamsburg meeting, was "tremendously salable and appealing." There might be some antitrust problems in channeling technological change, as proposed by Mr. Herrick, but our approach to such problems should be a positive one: We should start from the conviction that such changes are required and then work out the problems. "The real convincer will be the actual successful experiment," he concluded.

Mr. Gotbaum restated his strongly-held view that job content and job satisfaction are important, but not the most important part of the problem and the solution. Workers are interested only in material progress:

> At the reality of the bargaining table, I have never been able to bargain any aspect of job fulfillment above the buck. The membership won't trade job satisfaction for less dollars.[14]

He recommended more training and career development programs directly linked to work organizations and handled by a single institution such as the union or the company:

> If it's fragmented by institutions, there will be more chance to cop out. . . . And forget about research and development. Persuasion and trial are much better.

Who does what? By the end of the Williamsburg Conference, this question remained unanswered for all practical purposes. Either the materials provided in advance or the nature of the conference dialogue, or both, were inadequate stimulators to bring home effectively to the participants any sense of concern about the changing nature of workers' reactions to the tasks they must perform to earn their daily bread. *How* one earns that bread is, of course, part of a broader context.[15] As Ben S. Stephansky expressed it:

> We've been involved in a special case here. The larger case is humanizing the quality of life in our society. This is challenging every one of our institutions. Now that we've had the meeting, I have to say that we could not have invited a different group to come here. These are the relevant actors.

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But the Williamsburg Conference was only a prelude. Its intention was to provoke greater recognition of the role of work in the lives of men and women. Despite the seemingly lethargic nature of the participants' con-

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[14]It would be interesting to find out if such a choice has ever really been forced on workers, and how frequently.

[15]Such a sentence is now a required culturally-prescribed platitude. Failure to use such words opens one up to a criticism of not being "comprehensive."

cern, the Upjohn Institute studies and the Williamsburg Conference have touched off some organized interest; and efforts are underway — for example, to meet *separately* with union and management groups to promote small-scale programs to cope with the job problems of workers as *they* experience them.

If and when we ever reach a near-utopia in which all or nearly all would-be jobseekers find and keep secure and well-paying jobs, will we then have established a true utopia? Or will workers — at all levels — begin to concern themselves more with the very intrinsic content of the tasks they perform in order to achieve and maintain what they deem to be a high-quality standard of living? Will work-itself components become the greater issues with which workers, employers, and government will become more preoccupied than they are now, when "bread-and-butter" goals are viewed as the only bases for employee discontent?

Appendix
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